

and even admiration, in the absence of all the graces, and notwithstanding much incorrectness or clumsiness in the workmanship of the composition. But when thus standing the divested and sole excellence, it must be pre-eminently conspicuous to have this power. Below this pitch of single or of combined merit, a book cannot please persons of discerning judgment and refined taste, though its subject be the most interesting on earth; and for acceptableness, therefore, the subject is unfortunate in coming to those persons in that book. A disgusting cup will spoil the finest element which can be conveyed in it, though that were the nectar of immortality.

Now, in this view, I suppose it will be acknowledged that the evangelical cause has been, on the whole, far from happy in its prodigious list of authors. A number of them have displayed a high order of excellence; but one regrets as to a much greater number, that they did not revere the dignity of their religion too much, to beset and suffocate it with their superfluous offerings. To you I need not expatiate on the character of the collective Christian library. It will have been obvious to you that there is a multitude of books which form the perfect vulgar of religious authorship; a vast exhibition of the most subordinate materials that can be called thought, in language too grovelling to be called style. Some of these writers seem to have concluded that the greatness of the *subject* was to do everything, and that they had but to pronounce, like David, the name of "the Lord of Hosts,"* to give pebbles the force of darts and spears. Others appear to have really wanted the perception of any great difference, in point of excellence, between the meaner and the superior modes of writing. If they had read alternately Barrow's or South's pages and their own, they probably might have doubted on which side to assign the palm. A number of them, citing, in a perverted sense, the language of St. Paul, "not with excellency of speech," "not with enticing words of man's wisdom," "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,"† expressly disclaim everything that belongs to fine writing, not exactly as what they could not have attained, but as what they judge incompatible with the simplicity of

* I Samuel xvii. 45.

† i Corinthians ii. i, *et seq.*